

# Nature Connections

News and Events from the Missouri Department of Conservation • March/April 2016



In Missouri, crappie are among the most popular sport fish.



## Spring Variety In “Reel” Time

Trout aren’t the only fish biting in March. The March 1 trout park opener may grab statewide media attention, but many area anglers have their attention focused on other species. Some anglers know that March is a time to get excited about walleye fishing. For others, the white bass spawning runs that commence in March are an event that’s as near and dear to them as any other outdoor event. And all anglers know, if it’s time to start casting for spawning white bass and walleye, the crappie spawn is just around the corner.

**Walleye:** This popular member of the perch family is one of the first fish to spawn in spring. Many anglers claim walleye provide the best table fare of all the freshwater game fish species. Walleye, sometimes referred to as “jack salmon” or “walleyed pike,” get their

name from their large, opaque eyes. These large eyes are efficient at gathering available light.

The spawning period for walleye usually runs from early March into April. Spawning typically begins when water temperatures exceed 46°F. Mature walleye spawn on gravel shoals of tributary streams that flow into large reservoirs and on rocky points or along the rocky face of dams within the reservoir. Eggs are deposited along the rocks and left to develop without any parental care.

**White bass:** It doesn’t make as many headlines as the trout park opener, but in terms of angling interest, it could easily be argued that the annual “white bass run” is one of the biggest early spring

events in the Ozarks.

White bass belong to the group of fish known as the temperate bass (family Moronidae). This fish family is sometimes referred to as the “true bass.” Smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, and rock bass are members of the sunfish family (family Centrarchidae).

White bass are early spawners. In this region, white bass usually enter lake tributaries in March and remain until the middle or latter part of April. These spawning runs normally begin when water temperatures move above 50°F, although the length of daylight (photoperiod) very likely plays a part in the start of the spawn too. Spawning occurs in mid-water or near the surface over a gravelly or rocky bottom. It often takes place in a current and there is no nest preparation. The eggs settle to the

bottom where they become attached to rocks and hatch in about two days. One large female may produce nearly a million eggs in one spawning season.

**Crappie:** When crappie start to head for shallow waters to spawn sometime around early April, many anglers begin to head for the coves of area lakes. Other species may get more publicity in Missouri, but angler surveys show crappie are among the most popular for sport fish species in the state. Part of the reason for crappie’s appeal is their eagerness to take a lure. They’re also great table fare.

Missouri is actually home to two species of crappie—white crappie (*Pomoxis annularis*) and black crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*). Both can be found in reservoirs throughout the state, but white crappie tend to be more abundant in most areas. Crappie do not school, but instead congregate in loose aggregations around submerged trees, boat docks, and other suitable cover. They feed primarily on small fish, aquatic insects, and micro-crustaceans.

In spring, crappie often build nests in coves that are protected from wave action. Many nests are sometimes concentrated in the same cove. Males fan out nests in water ranging from a few inches in depth up to 20 feet. The spawning depth depends on water clarity. The most favored nesting sites are near a log or other large object, on a substrate consisting of fine gravel, or finely divided plant roots for the attachment of eggs.

Information about daily limits and length limits for these species can be found at your nearest Missouri Department of Conservation office or at [huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/fishing](http://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/fishing).

—Francis Skalicky, Media Specialist

# Joplin Office in the Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center

201 W. Riviera Drive, Suite B, Joplin, MO 64804 • [mdc.mo.gov/node/292](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/292)



The Joplin Conservation Office, located in the Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center, is your local connection to Missouri's fish, forests, and wildlife. Stop by and purchase hunting and fishing permits, attend a nature program, go for a hike, enjoy a picnic, or access Shoal Creek. Within the 190 acres of Wildcat Park, you will find a diverse mix of wildlife habitats rich with flora and fauna. From I-44, take exit 6, and turn south on MO-86. Turn right on Riviera Drive to enter Wildcat Park.

#### JOPLIN OFFICE HOURS:

Monday–Friday: 8 AM–5 PM  
Closed all state holidays.

#### AUDUBON CENTER HOURS:

Tuesday–Saturday: 9 AM–5 PM  
Sunday: 1–5 PM (March–October)

#### TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call **417-629-3423** to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

## SPRING BREAK PASSPORTS TO DISCOVERY! March 21–27



MONDAY TO SATURDAY: 9 AM–5 PM  
SUNDAY: 1–5 PM

Stop at any of the eight southwest Missouri or southeast Kansas nature centers or historic sites for "Your PEEP Passport to Discovery." Each site has a passport page with information and questions. Answer the questions and receive a stamp. Collect six stamps and earn a special PEEP (Partnership for Environment Education Program) patch! The hours above are for the Joplin Conservation Office & Audubon Center. Check with the other sites listed on the passport for their hours of operation. Passports are free and no registration is required.

## March and April Events

### Duck Zone Workshop

March 2 • Wednesday • 7–9 PM  
Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center (Joplin)  
*No registration required*

The Conservation Department wants to know how hunters feel about duck season dates and zone boundary locations that have been in place for the past five years and what they would like to see for the next five years. Participants will have the opportunity to review long-term data about weather, migration, habitat use, harvest, and hunter opinions, and discuss their season date and zone preferences with other hunters and Conservation staff. Hunter input gathered through the workshops, combined with hunter opinion surveys, will help establish Missouri's duck season dates and zones for the following five years.

### Tree Selection And Planting Workshop

March 14 • Monday • 6:30–8:30 PM  
Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center (Joplin)  
*Registration required (all ages, ages 15 and under must be accompanied by an adult)*

Everyone can improve their property with a little planning and forethought. Community Forester Jon Skinner will help you make better decisions to establish your new tree to optimize its benefits to you and your neighborhood. Everyone is welcome to attend this free workshop.

### Snakes, Spiders, And Turtles, Oh My!

March 21 • Monday • 2–3 PM  
Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center (Joplin)  
*No registration required (all ages)*

Have you ever wondered what a snake feels like? Want to discover why spiders like hanging around your house and garden? Come learn why some turtles explore the water but others are land lovers. Join us as we answer these questions and explore the habits of these fascinating critters.

### Basic Turkey Hunting

April 1 • Friday • 6–9 PM  
Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center (Joplin)  
*Registration required (all ages, ages 15 and under must be accompanied by an adult)*  
Spring turkey hunting offers some of the most challenging, exciting, and rewarding hunts in Missouri! Join us if you would like to sharpen your skills, learn new techniques, or gain confidence so you can harvest a big spring gobbler. We will discuss the eastern turkey's biology, habitat, hunt strategies, firearms, ammunition, and much more.

### Advanced Turkey Hunting Techniques

April 3 • Sunday • 12 NOON –3 PM  
Walter Woods Conservation Area (Joplin)  
*Registration required (all ages, ages 15 and under must be accompanied by an adult)*  
Would you like to gain the edge over that big gobbler that got away last season? This class may be for you! We will teach you how to set up for success and have a more enjoyable time in the woods with real world demonstrations on set up, equipment, calling, and scouting techniques.

### Naturescaping For Wildlife And You

April 23 • Saturday • 9 AM–12 NOON  
Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center (Joplin)  
*Registration required (ages 18–adult)*  
Adding native plants to your yard will help provide



valuable habitat for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. You'll learn why and how to include native plantings in your landscape, what plants to select, and how they benefit wildlife. Learn how to reconstruct natural food webs in your yard that enhance your landscaping to not only look aesthetically beautiful but also be attractive to wildlife.

## Spring Break Adventures at Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center (Joplin)

March 21–25 • Monday–Friday • 8 AM–4 PM

Come anytime during the week to enjoy a scavenger hunt along the trail or borrow a backpack filled with supplies to help you discover the creatures and plants that live at Wildcat Glades.

# Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

4897 N. Farm Road 61, Ash Grove, MO 65604 • [mdc.mo.gov/node/288](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/288)



## March and April Events

### Turkey Hunting Basics

March 26 • Saturday • 8:30 AM–1:30 PM

*Registration required (all ages)*

Join us to discover the basics of turkey hunting in the spring. We will cover safety, scouting, calling, proper setup, shotgun ballistics, and much more.



### Up the Ante for Spring Turkey

Most all of us have heard the old adage, "The job is not finished until the paperwork is done," and I have found this to be very true especially in the world of turkey hunting. There have been many studies conducted in

modern times about hunting and one of the public expectations from hunters is we must possess the knowledge, skill, and attitude necessary to cleanly and effectively harvest the wildlife resource being pursued. In order to do this with turkeys, we must first check our pattern density with the equipment and shotshells we will use for the hunt. You will need your shotgun, choke tubes, shells, 4-foot squares of paper, a backstop or target paper holder, markers, and the ability to draw a 30-inch circle around the densest portion of your pattern.

The proper method for testing your equipment is to determine the distance you intend to hunt and add 5 yards for error in distance estimation. You will then need to fire one shell from that distance on each of the 3 sheets of paper. Using a string that is 15 inches long with a marker tied to the end, locate the center of the densest portion of the pattern. Place the non-marker end of the string there and proceed to draw a circle around the pattern. Once you have the circle drawn, take the paper to a counting table and count each pellet hole in the paper inside of the circle or any pellets touching the line of the circle and draw a mark through them so you don't lose count. Repeat this for all 3 sheets of paper and then add the totals from each sheet together and divide by 3. This gives you the average pattern density to the 67<sup>th</sup> percentile for that gun, choke, load, and distance combination. You should have a minimum of 210 to 230 pellets of number 4, 5, or 6 pellets inside the 30-inch circle in order to meet the expectations of a quick clean harvest.

So what if you don't reach the minimum? You need to change something in the equation so you can reach that goal. For example, you might try a tighter choke tube, longer shell with a heavier payload (if your gun is designed to handle the longer shell), or try a closer distance to the target than what you originally planned. All of these changes will result in a richer pattern that increases your chances of a clean harvest and lowers the risk of wounding and losing the bird. In order to raise the percentage of assurance you have in your equipment, you simply need to shoot and count more shells. By pattern testing 10 shells, the level of confidence in your equipment is raised into the mid to higher 90<sup>th</sup> percentile range. Any time you change the brand of shells, the payload, the length of shell, the shot size, the choke tube, or the distance, your results can vary. So before you step out this spring to hunt that boss gobbler, please remember to finish the job by doing your paperwork first.

—Michael Brooks, Outdoor Education Center Supervisor

### Shotgun Shooting Basics

April 23 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM

*Registration required (all ages)*

Join us to discover the joys of shotgun shooting. We will discuss shotgun nomenclature, stance, dominant eye, mounting, moving the shotgun, and much more. You may use our shotguns or plan to use your own. Please make sure your shotgun is completely unloaded before arriving.

**Spring Youth Turkey Season: April 9 and 10**  
**Regular Spring Turkey Season: April 18 to May 8**



To get to the Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center, take US Highway 160 west of Willard, turn south on Farm Road 61, and go 2.5 miles, facility on the west side of road. Facilities include an outdoor education center and archery, rifle, pistol, and shotgun ranges, including skeet and trap.

### HOURS:

**September 14–April 14**

Monday and Thursday: 9 AM–4:30 PM

Friday–Sunday: 12 NOON–4:30 PM

**April 15–September 13**

Monday: 9 AM–4:30 PM

Thursday: 9 AM–7:30 PM

Friday–Sunday: 12 NOON–4:30 PM

Closed Tuesdays, Wednesdays and all state holidays. Hours are subject to change.

### FACILITIES AND FEES:

Available for individual and group use. Call for information and possible restrictions.

- Rifle/pistol range fee: \$3 per booth per hour
- Trap/skeet range fee: \$3 per person per round of 25 clay targets
- Shotgun patterning range: \$3 per person per hour
- Archery range: \$3 per person per hour
- Group use fee: \$20 per hour plus \$3 per round of 25 clay targets

### TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call **417-742-4361** or email [<DaltonRange@mdc.mo.gov>](mailto:DaltonRange@mdc.mo.gov) to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.



# Springfield Conservation Nature Center

4601 S. Nature Center Way, Springfield, MO 65804 • [mdc.mo.gov/node/287](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/287)



The Springfield Conservation Nature Center is located in southeast Springfield just west of US-65 off the James River Freeway (US-60). Indoors, enjoy nature exhibits, attend programs, purchase hunting and fishing permits, browse through a nature-related gift shop, and pick up free conservation brochures. Outdoors, enjoy three miles of hiking trails through a variety of natural communities. Call to schedule a naturalist-led program for your organized group.

## CURRENT HOURS:

**March 1–October 31**

**Building:** Tuesday–Saturday: 8 AM–5 PM

Sunday: 12 NOON–5 PM

Closed Mondays and state holidays

**Trails:** Sunday–Saturday: 8 AM–8 PM

## TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call **417-888-4237** to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

## March Events

### Conservation TEENS

#### Map And Compass

March 5 • Saturday • 10 AM–4 PM

*Registration begins February 16 (ages 12–17)*

Hey, teens, never be lost in the woods again! During this class, you'll learn the fundamentals of using topographical maps and an orienteering compass to find your way. After honing our skills together in the classroom, we'll spend the remainder of the afternoon in the field learning how to put our newfound orienteering skills to work. Maps, compasses, lunch, and transportation will be provided. Bring a water bottle.

#### The Art Of Woodcarving

March 5 • Saturday • 11 AM–12 NOON

*Registration begins February 16 (ages 12–adult)*

Try your hand at woodcarving with members of the Southern Missouri Woodcarving Artists as they teach carving techniques and show how to transform wood into works of art.

## March Events

### Woodcarving Demonstration

March 5 • Saturday • 1–4 PM

*No registration required*

Visit with members of the Southern Missouri Woodcarving Artists as they share information with the “wood-be” carver, demonstrate carving techniques, and show works in progress.

### Beginner Archery

March 9 • Wednesday • 10–11:30 AM OR

12 NOON–1:30 PM OR 2–3:30 PM

*Registration begins February 16 (ages 10–adult)*

You don't have to be a hunter to become a skilled archer. Learn a new skill and spend time practicing. No experience is necessary and archery equipment will be provided. This program takes place in our Outdoor Classroom which is not ADA accessible.

### Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

March 9 • Wednesday • 11–11:30 AM

*No registration required (ages 2–6)*

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2–6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

### Discover Our Nesting Birds

March 9 • Wednesday • 11 AM–12 NOON

*No registration required*

While your younger kids are enjoying *Story Time With Ms. Ladybug*, older children can learn about nesting birds in the auditorium. Afterwards, all ages can enjoy examining nests in the lobby.

### Nocturnal Animals Puppet Show

March 10 • Thursday • 11–11:45 AM OR 1–1:45 PM

*Registration begins March 1 (all ages)*

The night is filled with the strange sounds of hoots, howls, squeaks, and chirps, but there's no need to be afraid of the animals, their sounds, or the dark. Join us as we shed some light on these nighttime noisemakers.

### Exhibit Open House And Evening Stroll

March 11 • Friday • 6–9 PM

*No registration required*

Spend time indoors viewing the first phase of our new exhibits including a new nocturnal room! Enjoy refreshments and help us celebrate. Outside, the trails will be opened and patrolled. Bring a flashlight and a walking buddy because you're on your own.

### Nature And The Arts—Missouri Rivers

March 11 • Friday • 7–8 PM

*Registration begins February 16 (ages 12–adult)*

Inspired by both the beauty and the utility of our Ozarks woods and waters, Bob Korpella and Bob Ranney have combined their literary, musical, and photographic skills to bring us a program designed to entertain and enlighten nature lovers to both the health of and threats to our precious streams.

### Bird Banding

March 12 • Saturday • 1–4 PM

*No registration required*

Join us for a winter bird banding demonstration with the Missouri River Bird Observatory. Birds will be captured around the feeding stations and then banded in a location for easy viewing. While you're here for bird banding, check out the first phase of our new exhibits, enjoy refreshments, and make a bird-related craft. Stop by anytime.

### Crappie Fishing For Beginners

March 15 • Tuesday • 6:30–8 PM

*Registration begins March 1 (ages 12–adult)*

Whether you fish for crappie during winter or wait for them to spawn in the spring, crappie can be caught throughout the year. Join Table Rock Fisheries Biologist Shane Bush and Outdoor Skills Specialist Greg Collier to explore when, where, and how to catch one of the Ozarks favorite panfish.

### Woodcock Watch

March 15 • Tuesday • 6–8 PM

*Registration begins March 1 (ages 8–adult)*

At dusk in early spring, the woodcock (aka timber-doodle) does its strange courtship dance which is one of the most interesting bird spectacles of spring. With luck, we'll be watching. Dress warmly and wear hiking shoes as Volunteer Naturalist Dan Liles leads you on this 3-mile hike.

### A Walk On The Wild Side—Long Distance Backpacking For Beginners

March 17 • Thursday • 7–9 PM

*Registration begins March 1 (ages 15–adult)*

Long before the movie *Wild*—based on author Cheryl Strayed's adventurous solo backpacking trip on the Pacific Crest Trail—was released, Volunteer Naturalist Debbie Good was a solo long-distance hiker. In fact, Debbie has logged more than 2,000 backpacking miles, most of them on solo journeys. The first hour will cover the basics of planning and executing a successful long distance trip, including a detailed how-to for a 230-mile thru-hike on the Ozark Trail in Missouri. The second hour will be devoted more toward the nuances of backpacking as a woman.

### What Lies Below

#### The Colorful World Of Caves

March 18 • Friday • 7–8:30 PM

*Registration begins March 1 (ages 10–adult)*

Come explore the wonderful world beneath the surface with the photographers of the Springfield Plateau Grotto. The program will show the great and delicate beauty to be found in the caves of the Ozarks. We promise that you will get the itch to get muddy!

**Little Acorns** programs are listed on page 5.  
**March Events** continued on page 5.

# Springfield Conservation Nature Center

4601 S. Nature Center Way, Springfield, MO 65804 • [mdc.mo.gov/node/287](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/287)

## For Adults Only And Take A Hike (formerly Hiking Club)—Orienteering

March 19 • Saturday • 8 AM–5 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 18–adult)

Learn the basics of using a compass and topographic maps during the indoor portion of this program. After lunch, test your newfound orienteering skills outdoors. Bring a sack lunch and water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. **Hike is approximately 4 miles and rated moderate in difficulty.**

## Badge Bonanza

March 22 • Tuesday • 6:30–8 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 6–adult)

Attention all scouting and youth organizations! Here's a program to help you earn nature badges on Missouri animals, food chains, habitats, and more. Activities are also open to the public.

## Conservation Kids—Predators, They're Part Of The Picture

March 24 • Thursday • 6:30–7:45 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 7–12)

Predators—they don't get much respect. Discover the facts about this underrated, interesting, and diverse group of animals. Please, no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids.

## Spring Wildflower Hike

March 25 • Friday • 1–2:30 PM

Registration begins March 1 (ages 8–adult)

Take a stroll on the trails for a close look at wildflowers.

## April Events

### Native Plant Sale And Workshops

April 2 • Saturday • 9 AM–2 PM

No registration required

Stop by anytime to purchase native plants from a variety of plant vendors and pick up some nature-friendly information from our many exhibitors. There will be a series of guest speakers on topics related to native plants. Call for a flier of the day's activities.

### Conservation TEENS

#### Fishing At Bois D'Arc Pond

April 2 • Saturday • 10 AM–3 PM

Registration begins March 15 (ages 12–17)

Springtime in the Ozarks means fishing! Come and have a great time chasing lunkers. Fishing will be catch-and-release and participants 16 years of age and older must have a valid fishing permit. Meet at the Bois D'Arc pond and dress for the weather. Lunch will be provided.

### Primitive Skills Series Useful Plant Hike

April 3 • Sunday • 1–3 PM

Registration begins March 15 (ages 15–adult)

Plants have always been important for food, medicine, and other purposes. Volunteer Specialist Don Brink will explore the folklore and modern uses of several Missouri plants during this hike.

## Retracing Schoolcraft's Routes

April 7 • Thursday • 7–8:30 PM

Registration begins March 15 (ages 12–adult)

Join Springfield resident and re-enactor Bob Kipfer as he embodies Missouri Territory explorer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Learn what Schoolcraft saw when he walked through southern Missouri almost 200 years ago. An area biologist will share how the landscape has changed and about efforts to protect and restore species through a range of techniques. This program is co-sponsored by KBIA in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council and with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

April 13 • Wednesday • 11–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 2–6)

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2–6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

## Spring Wildflower Hike

April 13 • Wednesday • 1–2:30 PM

Registration begins April 1 (ages 8–adult)

Take a stroll on the trails for a close look at wildflowers.

## Babes In The Woods

April 15 • Friday • 10–11 AM

April 16 • Saturday • 10–11 AM

Registration begins April 1 (ages 0–2)

Bring your children ages 0–2 for a guided walk with Volunteer Naturalist Dana Tideman. Bring a stroller.

## Take A Hike (formerly Hiking Club)

April 16 • Saturday • 8:15 AM–5 PM

Registration begins April 1 (ages 18–adult)

Explore Hercules Glade Wilderness with Volunteer Naturalist Mike Mihalik. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Bring a sack lunch and water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. **Hike is approximately 5 miles and rated moderate in difficulty.**

## Ozark Whittlers & Woodcarvers

April 16 • Saturday • 1–4 PM

No registration required

Stop by to see members of the Ozark Whittlers & Woodcarvers transform wood into treasures.

## Parents As Teachers Story Time

April 22 • Friday • 12:30, 1:30, or 2:30 PM

No registration required (ages 0–5)

Parent Educators from Parents As Teachers will offer a *Nature At Its Best* story time. Enjoy stories, activities, and finger plays designed for children from birth to age five. Each session is forty-five minutes in length.

## Hike For Homeschoolers

April 22 • Friday • 1–3 PM

Registration begins April 1 (ages 5–adult)

Join us for a naturalist-guided hike to learn about plants and animals. Wear hiking shoes and bring journals, cameras, and binoculars.

## Temporary Exhibits

March • What Lies Below

The Colorful World of Caves

Photography by Members of the Springfield Plateau Grotto

April • Magnificent Mushrooms And  
Slime Molds Of The Ozarks

Mushroom Photography by Mark Bower

Missouri Mycological Society—Springfield Chapter

## For Women Only—Hiking At Henning Conservation Area

April 23 • Saturday • 8:30 AM–2:30 PM

Registration begins April 1 (women and girls  
ages 14–17 accompanied by an adult female)

Join us to explore the *Homesteader's Trail* at the Henning Conservation Area in Branson. Bring a sack lunch and water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Meet at the nature center and carpool. **Hike is approximately 4.5 miles and is rated moderate to difficult.**

## Conservation Kids—Earth Day

April 28 • Thursday • 6:30–7:45 PM

Registration begins April 1 (ages 7–12)

Learn about making good environmental choices, recycling, and what kids can do to make our earth a little more "green." Please, no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids.

Please limit to one per month.

## Little Acorns

Programs are 45 minutes in length.

## March Events

Registration begins March 1 (ages 3–6)

### Cottontail Tales

March 11 • Friday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

Come have a hoppin' good time as you learn about the life story of this familiar Missouri resident.

### Salamander Slide

March 22 • Tuesday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

March 26 • Saturday • 11 AM

Slide on in to meet the salamander family! We will investigate some of the special features that make this creature an interesting and unique amphibian.

## April Events

Registration begins April 1 (ages 3–6)

### Spring Peepers

April 12 • Tuesday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

April 23 • Saturday • 11 AM

It's time for some frog-frolicking fun exploring the life cycle and world of the tiny peepers.

### Turtlemania

April 14 • Thursday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

April 16 • Saturday • 11 AM

Turtles come in many shapes and sizes. Learn the names of common turtles and discover where and how they live.



# Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery and Conservation Center

483 Hatchery Road, Branson, MO 65616 • [mdc.mo.gov/node/290](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/290)



The Fish Hatchery and Conservation Center is located on 221 acres in Branson off Highway 165 next to Table Rock Dam. Outdoors, visitors will experience an active fish hatchery with 700,000 rainbow and brown trout in 30 pools with opportunities to feed the fish. Indoors, enjoy a 3,500 gallon aquarium and hands-on nature exhibits and purchase hunting and fishing permits. The area also features four hiking trails, a picnic area, a boat ramp, and access to Lake Taneycomo.

## **FACILITY HOURS:**

### **June–July–August:**

Sunday–Saturday: 9 AM–6 PM

### **Remainder of Year**

Sunday–Saturday: 9 AM–5 PM

**Closed all state holidays**

## **AREA AND TRAIL HOURS:**

4 AM–10 PM

The area is open to fishing 24 hours daily, but special permits and regulations do apply. Check the current fishing regulations or call for details.

## **TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:**

Programs are free. Call **417-334-4865**, Ext. 0, to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

## **FISHING LAKE TANEYCOMO:**

Before fishing on Lake Taneycomo, become familiar with the regulations and restrictions. Come by for a free brochure of the entire lake including fishing accesses. For specific details about trout fishing here and across the state, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/5603](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/5603).

## *March and April Events*

### **Owl Prowl**

March 11 • Friday • 7–9 PM

*Registration required (all ages)*

Can owls see in the dark? How many kinds of owls are there in the Ozarks? What sounds do they make? Here is your chance to learn about owls and how important they are to our landscape. In addition to a short indoor presentation, we will go on a guided outdoor night hike to listen and "call" for owls. Back inside, we will investigate owl pellets to see what owls have eaten.

### **Bluebird House Workshop**

March 19 • Saturday • 10–11:45 AM

*Registration required (families, ages 6 and up)*

If you enjoy having bluebirds in your area, here is your chance to learn more about them and why they are the state bird of Missouri. Each family will make one house to take home and must make their own reservation. All you need to bring is a hammer and an interest in bluebirds.



## *Morel Mania*

Few outdoor pursuits have a more passionate following than hunting for morel mushrooms. Whereas some "hunting seasons" have a definite start and end, the allure of morel hunting is that you must read many signs of nature to have the best results. What makes morel hunting so popular is the combination of the thrill of the "hunt" and the excellent taste.

Morels are some of the safest and easiest mushrooms to recognize. However, they are not necessarily the easiest to find. Morels always grow on the ground and have a relatively large honeycomb or brain-like textured brown club head. Unlike the false morel, which is not edible, the stem and the club head of the morel is hollow. Always be 100 percent sure you have an edible mushroom before eating one. Morels are usually a dark brown to light brown color and can sometimes be 12 inches tall and 6 inches in diameter. Contrary to popular belief, morels do not continuously grow. When you find a morel, that is the final size it will ever get. So if you leave it to grow, you are simply giving someone else the chance to find it.

### **Here are some tips to find morel mushrooms:**

**WHEN:** In southwest Missouri mushrooms can be found from late March through early-May with the peak being the middle of April. Early morels can be found when overnight temperatures stay above 50°F for at least three nights in a row.

**WHERE:** Mushrooms can be found in many forests, but look for well-drained south-facing slopes with minimal leaf litter. Some morel hunters, also called "shroomers," claim that you have a better than average chance of finding morels near ash and elm trees. One final reminder is when you find one, stop and look around carefully. It is common to find more than one in a small area.

**LOCATIONS:** Do remember that you need permission to be on someone's property so be a good neighbor and ask before you hunt. Most, but not all, public lands allow for collecting of mushrooms for personal consumption. Always consult area regulations before looking for mushrooms on public property.

Looking for morels is a great way to enjoy nature in the early spring. Most morel hunters are just as happy being out looking for mushrooms even if they don't find any. Don't ever be afraid to ask fellow mushroom hunters for advice. However, most "shroomers" rarely divulge their secret locations, so it is up to you to find your own "honey hole." For more information about morel mushrooms, photos, and even recipes, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/991](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/991).

—John Miller, Interpretive Center Manager

# Southwest Regional Office

2630 N. Mayfair Avenue, Springfield, MO 65803 • [mdc.mo.gov/node/257](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/257)



## Safe Turkey Tips

Hunting the eastern wild turkey is the most exciting and possibly the most addictive of all hunting opportunities in Missouri. When the hunt goes well, it can represent an exciting series of events culminating in the harvest of an amazing bird with a great story to share. But when it goes badly, it's a very different story. Safety in the spring turkey woods is not difficult, but it takes diligence, patience, and knowledge. As a Hunter Education Instructor and turkey hunter, I read and hear about hunting incidents, the circumstances, and their results. I wonder what I can do as a teacher and hunter. Safe turkey hunting to me boils down to a few important points every hunter should remember.

**Target identification with safe shooting lanes.** Study your target closely, seeing the tom's beard and characteristics that identify a legal spring gobbler. Make sure the path to your target and beyond is clear. Never assume! Never, ever, fire at sounds, movement, or color. Always see the bird for what it is. Excitement, target fixation, carelessness, and lack of patience can lead to hunting incidents. As I read the summaries of incidents from years past, the term "victim mistaken for game" is an unfortunate recurring theme. Wait for a clean shot so no other birds could be struck accidentally. As you place the decoys, look well past them in the direction you plan to shoot, identifying any possible hazards. You may have to move your setup for optimum safety and effectiveness.

**Hunt defensively.** You may not be the only hunter in the woods. Put your back against a tree that is wider than your shoulders and make sure that visibility beyond your decoys is good enough to see other hunters approaching. Protect yourself by wearing hunter orange if you are moving in the woods. When you harvest a bird, don't carry it over your shoulder unless you can cover it. Remember—"victim mistaken for game." We see the glory shot on television of the successful hunter hoisting the bird over their shoulder and tromping out of the woods. That hunter has put a large swinging target on their back! Use a turkey vest with a game bag or other method to help haul the bird out of the field and out of sight. Make a plan and stick to it. Try to stay close enough to hunting partners so contact is easy and you can always locate them.

**Exercise basic firearms safety.** The most important firearm safety tip is muzzle control. It's so simple but so often involved in incidents. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction. Have your finger off the trigger if you haven't identified your target. "Off target, off trigger" is easy. Keep actions open and firearms unloaded if you are not ready to shoot. Use your firearm's mechanical safety—understanding that a safety NEVER takes the place of good muzzle control. Lastly, don't take unnecessary risks. If you need to cross an obstacle, UNLOAD! A few seconds of smart, responsible gun handling saves lives.

Often we hunt with family and/or friends. Once the gun goes off, that shot can never be called back. If we all remember the points above, that shot might harvest the biggest turkey yet. Have fun this spring turkey season and hunt safe!

— Andy Rhodes, *Outdoor Skills Specialist*

## Hunter Education Sessions

### Classroom (Knowledge) Sessions

Location	Date/Time
Springfield Conservation Nature Center .....	March 11 • Friday • 6–10 PM
	April 8 • Friday • 6–10 PM

### Skills Sessions

Location	Date/Time
Springfield Conservation Nature Center .....	March 12 • Saturday • 8 AM–12 NOON or 1–5 PM
	April 9 • Saturday • 8 AM–12 NOON or 1–5 PM
Andy Dalton Shooting Range .....	March 5 • Saturday • 8 AM–12 NOON
	April 2 • Saturday • 8 AM–12 NOON
Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center .....	March 7 • Monday • 6–10 PM
	March 30 • Wednesday • 6–10 PM
	April 4 • Monday • 6–10 PM
	April 13 • Wednesday • 6–10 PM

Visit [on.mo.gov/1LFgst1](http://on.mo.gov/1LFgst1) to register for these sessions and to check for session changes and/or other locations.



The Southwest Regional Office is conveniently located just west of the intersection of US-65 and Kearney in Springfield. The public may obtain information on land management, nuisance wildlife, educational opportunities, river and pond management, and more, as well as purchase hunting and fishing permits and obtain area brochures for Conservation Department areas.

**HOURS:** Monday–Friday: 8 AM–5 PM  
Closed all state holidays

**PHONE:** 417-895-6880

## Reminder

Hunter Education certification has two parts: knowledge and skills. You must complete and pass **BOTH** sessions to earn your certificate. For more information on Hunter Education, contact your local Missouri Department of Conservation office or visit the Conservation Department website at [on.mo.gov/1JkL7uU](http://on.mo.gov/1JkL7uU).

The Springfield Conservation Nature Center is excited to share the first phase of their new exhibits. Approximately one third of the exhibits have been replaced or renovated including the exhibit entrance, spring pool, turtle tanks, and the popular nocturnal room. Plans are currently underway to update the remaining exhibits. Stop by during one of the two planned open houses to enjoy refreshments and check out the new exhibits or drop by anytime the building is open. Current building hours are Tuesday–Saturday from 8am–5pm.

## New Exhibits



at the  
**Nature Center**

### Exhibit Open House And Evening Stroll

March 11 • Friday • 6–9 PM

The nature center building will be open during evening hours to view the new exhibits. Enjoy refreshments indoors and explore the trails after dark. Trails will be opened and patrolled until 9pm, so bring a flashlight and a walking buddy because you're on your own.

### Exhibit Open House

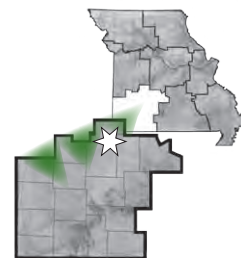
March 12 • Saturday • 1–4 PM

Check out the first phase of the new exhibits, enjoy refreshments, make a bird-related craft, and view bird banding by the Missouri River Bird Observatory.

## Conservation Showcase:

# Pomme de Terre Lake

**LOCATION:** Pomme de Terre Lake is a 7,790-acre reservoir in southwest Missouri operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Missouri Department of Conservation manages the fishery in the lake in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is made up of two major arms that are named the same as the streams that feed them—the Pomme de Terre and Lindley Creek arms. The reservoir is located in Hickory and Polk counties and is approximately 50 miles north of Springfield. It features a variety of sport-fishing opportunities and is one of the few locations in the state where anglers can fish for muskie.



**HISTORY:** Early French explorers gave the name “Pomme de Terre” to the river that is now one of the major feeder streams of the reservoir. The phrase means “Apple of the Earth” or “potato.” It’s thought this name was derived from the “potato bean” plant (*Apios americana*) that grows throughout the region and was a food source for local Indian tribes. Pomme de Terre Reservoir was authorized in 1938 as part of a comprehensive flood control plan for the Missouri River basin. Construction on the lake began in 1957 and was completed in 1961.

**FISHING:** Fishing prospects for Pomme de Terre in 2016 look bright. Excellent shad production over the past few years continues to keep all sport fish species growing at a fast rate and in very good condition. Walleye population densities are good due to past stockings. Many of the walleye exceed the 15-inch minimum length limit and the opportunity to catch a legal size is good. The white bass population continues to recover from a significant die-off that occurred in the fall of 2009. A dramatic increase in the number of white bass was observed in 2015, which bodes well for anglers who are looking forward to fishing for this species at Pomme de Terre this year. Crappie fishing should be excellent. Overall densities of black crappie and white crappie have increased significantly in recent fall sampling. The most recent surveys show approximately 50 percent exceeding the 9-inch minimum length limit and 30 percent exceeding 10 inches. Black bass fishing should continue to be good. Anglers are reminded there’s a 13-inch minimum length limit at Pomme de Terre for all black bass species (largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted). The lake features 41 constructed fish habitat brush piles that are marked with green “Fish Attractor” signs and are distributed across the lake. Maps showing locations and GPS coordinates of each attractor can be found at [on.mo.gov/1N9Gp5e](http://on.mo.gov/1N9Gp5e) or by using the free mobile app “Find MO Fish” at [mdc.mo.gov/node/15421](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/15421).

**NATURE VIEWING:** If you like to pack binoculars and a camera on your lake trips, Pomme de Terre has a variety of nature-viewing options in the spring. Like other Missouri reservoirs, Pomme de Terre is visited by a variety of migrating birds in the spring. Waterfowl, herons, pelicans, and a variety of shorebird species are among the sights that might be spotted at the lake in spring.

**HIKING AND CAMPING:** Camping is available at various sites around the lake. Campsite reservations can be made through the National Recreation Service at 1-877-444-6777 (toll free) and via the internet at [ReserveUSA.com](http://ReserveUSA.com). Several Missouri Department of Natural Resources hiking trails can be found at various spots around the lake. For more information about Pomme de Terre Lake, visit [on.mo.gov/202qAGR](http://on.mo.gov/202qAGR).

—Francis Skalicky, Media Specialist